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ABSTRACT

This report describes a classroom intervention for improving the social skills of fourth-grade students in an urban school. Children in the school were exhibiting poor social skills, as evidenced by lapses in self-discipline and by incidences of inappropriate behavior as noted by teacher observation and anecdotal records. After examining the problem, it was concluded that the students lacked exposure to appropriate social skills, possessed low self-esteem, displayed little empathy for others, and needed experience in problem solving. After reviewing the literature on these difficulties, an action plan was developed that incorporated two approaches: cooperative learning and the use of the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum. Students were evaluated through a variety of methods, including social skills questionnaires, informal class assessments, and journal entries. The intervention began on the first day of school and the need for appropriate social skills was emphasized in all aspects of the school day. The social skills required for successful cooperative learning improved in varying degrees throughout the intervention. It was concluded that social skills must be purposely taught and integrated into the curriculum at all grade levels. Ten appendices provide examples of surveys, questionnaires, and other materials used for the intervention. Contains 22 references. (RJM)

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IMPROVING STUDENT SOCIAL SKILLS THROUGH COOPERATIVE LEARNING AND THE SECOND STEP VIOLENCE - PREVENTION CURRICULUM

by

Kathleen Pirrello

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education and Leadership

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Abstract

AUTHOR: Kathleen Pirrello SITE: Rockford I
DATE: September 1993

TITLE: Improving Student Social Skills Through Cooperative Learning and the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum

ABSTRACT: This report describes a classroom intervention for improving the social skills of fourth grade students in an elementary school setting located in an urban industrial community in northern Illinois. The problem was documented through teacher observation, professional staff survey and student self-assessment.

Analysis of the probable cause data revealed that students lack exposure to appropriate social skills, have a low self-esteem, lack empathy for others and lack experience in problem solving.

Solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, resulted in the selection of cooperative learning and the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum as interventions to improve the students' social skills.

Symptoms of the original problem were reduced as projected: social skill awareness increased, students made progress in working in formal cooperative learning groups.

Chapter 1

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND DESCRIPTION OF CONTEXT

Problem Statement

The students across grade level and program focus at the school of the researcher exhibit poor social skills, as evidence by lack of self-discipline and incidences of inappropriate behavior as noted by teacher observation and anecdotal records.

Description of Immediate Problem Setting Characteristics and Demographics of School

The school discussed in this research was the first magnet school to open in the district. Located in the southwest quadrant of the city, the school is in an economically depressed area. Under a court order, stemming from a desegregation lawsuit, the school was opened in the late summer of 1989 and was designated as a Magnet School. At that time, there was no clear focus for the magnet. Because the building had originally been a junior high facility built in 1940, the size made it possible to house three alternative programs, which included a magnet program (K-6), an arts alternative program (1-6) and a gifted program (4-6). By including the arts alternative and gifted programs, the minority/majority ratio ordered by the court was in compliance. Beginning with the 1992-1993 school year, the

arts alternative program melded into the communication technology magnet to form the communications, arts, technology magnet. A concerted effort has been made to increase the minority population of the gifted program. During the four years since the magnet opened, the minority population has decreased, and the majority population has increased. Table 1 presents data comparing the majority/minority enrollment at The school from 1990 to 1993.

Table 1

Majority - Minority
Enrollment
1990-1993
Percent

School Year	Majority	Minority
1990-1991	26.3	73.7
1991-1992	38.0	62.0
1992-1993	49.6	50.4

Table 2 presents data comparing the majority/minority enrollment of the gifted program at the school from 1990-1993.

Table 2

Gifted Program Grades 4 Through 6
Majority - Minority
Enrollment
1990-1993
Percent

School Year	Majority	Minority
1990-1991	87.5	12.5
1991-1992	79.5	20.5
1992-1993	71.8	28.2

Because the school is a Magnet School, 99 percent of the 752 students are bused from the entire city. As an indicator of the socioeconomic status of the students, 413 (55 percent) of the school population receives free or reduced lunch, as compared to 26.2 percent in the district. Of the 78 staff members, two are administrators and 29 are kindergarten through sixth grade classroom teachers, with an average class size of 26. Twenty staff members are specialists, including a counselor and curriculum director. The support staff of 27 includes custodial and food service workers, office staff, nurse, and aides. Also, many volunteers from the community

and local industry work with students in the building.

The population mobility rate for the 1991-1992 school year was 8.4 percent compared to district mobility rate of 20.1 percent and the state rate of 20.4 percent.

The only entrance criterium for the Magnet School is that the population of the school meet the racial quota of 50 percent majority and 50 percent minorities as set by the court order. Entrance criteria for the gifted program include test scores and the same racial quota as the Magnet School. The racial quota for the magnet program was in compliance at the beginning of the 1992-1993 school year; whereas the gifted program population was 71.8 percent majority and 28.2 percent minorities. (Refer to tables 1 and 2.)

Characteristics and Demographics of Classroom

The fourth grade classroom discussed in this research is one of the three fourth grade classrooms in the magnet program. All magnet classrooms contain three IBM computers and a television. The researched class consists of 24 students, 11 girls and 13 boys. The racial mix includes 13 minority students and 11 majority students. The socioeconomic status of the class is indicated by the fact that 20 students receive free lunch. The class includes 20 students who were in third grade at the school of the researcher last year and four students who entered the school during the 1993-1994 school year. Of the 24 students in the class, one has been

diagnosed as having a behavior disorder. Three others are in the process of testing for learning disability or behavior disorder eligibility. Three students are given medication for Attention Deficit Disorder. Three students display significant behavior problems.

The magnet program includes several weekly activities in addition to the usual art, music and physical education specials. A class in Japanese culture and language is presented for 35 minutes per week. Creative drama is presented by a specialist, on stage, in the auditorium, each week for 45 minutes. All magnet students also spend 45 minutes per week with a specialist in the computer lab and 45 minutes per week with a specialist in the visual communications lab. The extra programs are in beginning stages of implementation. Each classroom teacher is to stay with the class during these activities with the goal of using the specialists and the technical equipment to combine efforts in a meaningful way with the curriculum being covered in the classroom. Cross-grade level theme groups, which are also in the beginning stages, have been added to the magnet program. The goal, along with intra grade level socialization, is to use the interdisciplinary approach to learning.

Description of Surrounding Community

The city in which this research takes place has a population of 150,000. The economy is strongly based on industrial manufacturing. Although the total population of the city has remained stable in recent years, there has been an increase in minority population and a significant change in growth patterns. Construction of new homes and businesses has been primarily on the east side of the city. Ninety percent of the minority population resides on the west side of the city.

The public schools have a student population of 28,045, of which 15,727 are elementary students. Of the 1,696 teachers in the district, 92.7 percent are of racial majority and 7.3 percent are of racial minority. The average teacher salary is $37,242.00

In 1989 a federal court order stated that the school district was to integrate the schools as quickly as possible. Since that time the school board has labored to carry out programs which fulfill the integration criteria. "Of the thirty-nine elementary school attendance centers, thirty-six of them have attendance areas. Without voluntary transfers only six elementary schools would be racially identifiable." (Fall Housing Report, 1992 p.4)

As presented in table 3, the racial composition of the district enrollment has changed since 1977.

Table 3

Public School Enrollment
Majority - Minority
1977 - 1992
Percent

Year	Majority	Minority
1977	78.6	21.4
1984	73.1	26.9
1991	69.2	30.8
1992	67.4	32.6

Regional and National Context of Problem

A topic of great concern in the educational community is the need for social skills in children.

In 1939 at a gathering of teachers, Buber, as quoted by Kohn (1991 p.497) stated, "Education worthy of the name is essentially education of character." According to Kohn, Buber "meant that the very profession of teaching calls on us to try to produce not merely good learners, but good people." (Kohn, 1991 p.506)

Dysfunctional socialization is evidenced by "the

disintegration of the family, teen pregnancy, teen suicide, and other indications of social upheaval and collapse" (Kirshenbaum, 1992 p.771) To further evidence the need for social skill training, Kohn states, "A dozen years of schooling do nothing to promote generosity or a commitment to the welfare of others." (Kohn, 1991 p.498)

Further evidence that social responsibility is a cause for concern is stated by Schaps and Solomon, (1990 p.39) describing an experimental program in California. The program "contributes to the creation of a caring community in the schools. The main goal is to balance one's own needs with the needs of others."

More statements have been written about the need for social skills. "People do not know instinctively how to interact effectively with others. Nor do interpersonal and group skills magically appear when they are needed. Students must be taught these skills and be motivated to use them." (Johnson and Johnson, 1989/1990 p.30)

The need for the development of social skills is also a matter of great concern for the researcher. "These kids don't have any social skills" is a statement frequently heard whenever teachers from the target school are together.

Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Background

As pointed out in Chapter 1, the student population exhibits poor social skills that affect both learning and behavior. Research acknowledges a growing concern nationally for the lack of appropriate social skills in schools, and indicates the necessity for specifically teaching social skills in the classroom.

Locally, the school district has addressed the issue of social concerns and behavior by providing a mandatory Cultural Differences Workshop for all professional staff. More recently, the district required that all teachers complete a Discipline With Dignity program within a two-year period.

In the target building a discipline plan was formulated to address the need for the improvement of social skills and general behavior. The discipline plan included: behavior slips, "caught being good tickets," school rule posters, monthly VIP parties for students who received no behavior slips, double-dip parties for appropriate cafeteria behavior, school produced videos showing appropriate behavior in various daily situations and brainstorming and problem solving staff meetings which resulted in increased empathy and support among staff members. The implementation of these district-wide and

school-based policies has resulted in a greater awareness of social concerns and, to a limited degree, an improvement in behavior.

Problem Evidence

A social skills questionnaire was given to the target students before intervention. The 34 questions addressed the following four social skill subgroups: assertion, cooperation, empathy and self control. Table 4 presents the pre-test raw scores of the questionnaire.

Table 4

Pretest Responses of Fourth Grade Students to Social Skills Questionnaire Number of Responses and Percent September, 1993

Question Category	Never		Sometimes		Very Often	
	%	# of Responses	%	# of Responses	%	# of Responses
Cooperation	2	7	41	93	57	125
Assertion	4	8	49	107	48	105
Empathy	2	4	41	91	57	125
Self Control	9	19	50	109	42	92

Table 4 presents data from the social skills questionnaire administered to the target students in September, 1993. Students were encouraged to be candid in their responses by presenting the questionnaire in a non-

threatening way. Students were asked not to put their names on the questionnaire.

The percentage of "Never" responses ranged from a low of 2 percent to under ten percent for self-control. Table 4 shows that a very small percent of the target students perceive themselves as having very weak social skills.

The number of responses by the target group are slightly greater in the category of "Very Often" then in the category of "Sometimes." The table shows that the students felt that their weakest social skill was self-control, and that cooperation and empathy tied for the strongest.

A survey taken by the professional staff of the researcher's school yielded evidence of the problem. The staff was asked to describe the social skills observed in their students using the scale from "least weak" to "weakest". The following list presents the social skills in order from weakest to least weak.

(a) Appropriate responses to negative situations,

(b) Ability to control temper,

(c) Ability to compromise,

(d) Ability to work well with others,

(e) Ability to follow directions,

(f) Ability to stay on task,

(g) Ability to show kindness,

(h) Ability to respond positively to situations,

(i) Ability to show friendliness.

Responses showed that the students were very weak in making appropriate responses in negative situations. Overall student friendliness was seen as the least weak social skill. A strong correlation appears between the student questionnaire, as presented on Table 4, and the professional staff survey. Student responses showed self-control as the weakest social skill. Correspondingly the two weakest social skills as observed by the professional staff were appropriate responses to negative situations and the ability to control temper.

Evidence of the lack of appropriate social skills has been observed by the researcher in the school setting. Cooperation, assertion, empathy and self control are among the very evident social skills lacking in the target group. Frequent physical and verbal impulsive reactions along with disrespect toward peers and adults are of great concern to the researcher. Inappropriate responses to negative situations are often the norm in student conflicts. Empathy is sadly lacking, for children are often very unkind to one another. The inability to control temper, compromise and work well with others is a serious problem in the classroom and on the playground. The use of various problem solving techniques, parent counseling interventions, and discipline referrals has met with little long range success.

Probable Cause

The professional staff of the researchers' school was given a survey in which probable causes of poor social skills, as found in research, were listed. The staff members were asked to prioritize ten of the 19 listed causes they viewed as most descriptive of the students in the school. Twenty-seven responses were received and tallied. The three probable causes most frequently noted by the professional staff all had the lack of exposure to social skills in common. The following list presents the results of the survey. Responses are listed in the order most frequently reported by the faculty.

(a) Lack of exposure to appropriate social skills,

(b) Lack of emphasis on social skills in the home,

(c) Lack of modeling of social skills,

(d) Lack of consideration for others,

(e) Low self esteem,

(f) Lack of obedience to legitimate authority ,

(g) Lack of practice using social skills with guidance,

(h) Importance of self verses others,

(i) Inappropriate behavior seen as acceptable,

(j) Lack of experience in problem solving,

(k) Lack of commitment and goals,

(l) Influence of media,

(m) Lack of sense of responsibility to community,

(n) Lack of decision making skills,

(o) Lack of empathy,

(p) Lack of emphasis on social skills in schools,

(q) Lower teacher expectations,

(r) Lack of maturity,

(s) Perceived lack of administrative support by teachers,

(t) Lack of ability to cope with peer pressure.

Probable cause data from literature indicate many indirect causes. However, historical evidence suggests a tradition in education that Wayne (1985/1986 p.4) calls "the deliberate transmission of moral values to students." According to Wayne (1985/1986), the decline in social skills is a direct result of the changing role of schools which de-emphasizes moral values. Wayne (1985/1986 p.4) states, "The current policies in Ame.ican education that give secondary priority to transmitting morality represent a sharp fracture with the great tradition."

Kirschenbaum (1992 p.771) explains, "The history of values education and moral education over the past 40 years closely parallels American social history during the same period." In the fifties it was taken for granted that moral values were taught in school. Changes throughout the next decades led away from and then back to the concern for values and morality today.

According to Schaps, Solomon, and Watson, (1985-1986) these changes in American schools have included a shift toward

the academics and away from character development. They further suggested that the effectiveness of the traditional institutions of church and family may be diminishing. Kohn (1991 p.499) concurs,

> "It is sometimes said that moral concerns and social skills ought to be taught at home. I know of no one in the field of education or child development who disagrees. The problem is that such instruction along with nurturance and warmth, someone to model altruism, opportunities to practice caring for other, and so forth--is not to be found in all homes."

Johnson and Johnson (1989/1990) agree with Kohn and further state that interpersonal skills are not instinctive but must be taught and practiced.

Further evidence of the cause of "lack of consideration for others" points to the underlying issues of increased importance placed on self versus others, and lack of empathy. Lasley (1987) suggests that children and American society as a whole are preoccupied with self. He contends that this self-centeredness has been fostered by our schools and attributes this, in part, to the classroom structure in which competition is rewarded.

The lack of responsibility to community is regarded in literature as a "fundamental lack of connection and commitment between self and the larger community." (Berman 1990 p.75) Schaps and Soloman (1990) suggest that many children do not experience these important social values in their daily lives and are not able to make a strong commitment to the school community or the community at large. To further emphasize the

importance of commitment to community Molnar (1990 p.74) states, "When moral instruction portrays society as a collection of individuals, each responsible for him or herself, it fails to take into account the morality of our social environment and the collective responsibility of all of us for each of us."

Other probable causes for poorly developed social skills in children include the influence of media and peer groups. Mixed messages from media and peer groups are seen by Elias and Clabby (1988) as further detriments in developing appropriate social skills, especially when there are unstable and non-supportive family circumstances which do not offer positive alternatives.

Wynne and Walberg very strongly cite several conditions necessary for positive character development. "Accepting discipline is a central element in character development." (1985\86 p.17) They also state that, "Good character also requires obedience to legitimate authority."

A summary of probable causes for the problem gathered from the literature included the following elements:

(a) The role of schools has moved away from the place where moral values are taught,

(b) Influence of the church and family may be weakening,

(c) There is lack of proper modeling of good social skills,

(d) There is a lack of opportunities to practice using

social skills,

(e) Individuals are preoccupied with self,

(f) There is a lack of sense of community,

(g) There are negative influences of media,

(h) There are negative influences of peer groups,

(i) Students exhibit a lack of discipline and obedience to legitimate authority.

Chapter 3

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of the Literature

Analysis of probable cause suggested reasons related to the lack of appropriate social skills by students. Research data suggested the following probable causes: the role of schools has moved away from the place where moral values are taught, influence of the church and family may be weakening, lack of proper modeling of good social skills exists, lack of opportunities to practice using social skills exists, preoccupation with self is common, lack of sense of community is prevalent, negative influences of media exist, negative influences of peers is present, and there is a lack of discipline and obedience to legitimate authority.

The literature search for solution strategies was organized as suggested by these probable cause data. Analysis of these data suggested questions concerning the role of family, church and school in teaching social skills and providing the modeling and practice in using them. Other probable cause suggested a need for selflessness and a sense of community in students. Negative influence of the media and peer groups, along with lack of discipline and obedience to legitimate authority, were further probable causes suggested

in literature as by-products of insufficient modeling, practice and experience in using proper social skills in a group or community.

"Getting along well with others is still the world's most needed skill. With it....there is no limit to what a person can do. We need people, we need the cooperation of others. There is very little we can do alone." (Nightengale as quoted by Costa 1990 p.22) Berman (1990 p.75) defines social responsibility as "a personal investment in the well being of others that doesn't just happen. It takes intention, attention, and time."

In a discussion of the role of the school in teaching social skills, Wynne and Walberg (1985/1986) state that an atmosphere of respect must be established in the school. "Good character also requires obedience to legitimate authority and teachers are the most prominent extra-family authority figures that students meet." (Wynne and Walberg 1985/1986 p.18) Kohn (1991 p.499) points out that "schools may need to provide what some children will not otherwise get." Kohn continues by explaining that the school is a logical place to actively teach and practice social skills because children are in regular contact with their peers in a learning environment. Berman (1990) asserts that learning basic social skills needs to be a core part of a school's curriculum. Bulkeley and Cramer (1990) and Slavin (1991) confirm the findings that children can be helped by group

social skills training in a school setting. Kohn (1991) further states that social skills lessons need not be separately taught, but should be integrated into the academic curriculum.

The importance of modeling and practicing social skills in the classroom was often emphasized in research. Berman (1990 p.78) states emphatically, "Teachers who create environments that model social skills will succeed in teaching them." Sharan and Sharan (1987 p.21) agree and state, "First and foremost, the teacher must model the social and communication skills expected from the students." Kohn (1991) adds that studies have shown that children who observe caring and proper social behavior in their teachers are more likely to mirror that behavior. According to Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1990), experiences in working together to successfully complete a task enhance social competencies, and the mastery of these social competencies is dependent on practice. In pointing out the importance of actually practicing social skills, Kirschenbaum (1992) emphasizes the need to allow students to experience the skills through activities, discussions and projects which help internalize the skills.

To promote the social skill of selflessness, Johnson, et al. (1990) state that organized group activities counteract egocentrism by giving children experiences that enable them to understand another's point of view. Lasley (1987 p.674)

states, "Selflessness occurs when an individual considers his or her behavior in the broader context of the cultural group in which he or she functions. Most important for educators, it appears as if selflessness is learned during childhood as a result of myriad interaction with adults."

Berman's (1990) study indicated that many young people today lack a sense of community because they feel alienated from society and feel powerless to change it. Berman states that it is important that students have opportunities to contribute to the community and the world. He asserts that if young people are to learn social responsibility, it will have to be intentionally taught, even to the point of redesigning schools to stress empowerment, cooperation, compassion and respect. Schools need to balance the personal achievement of students with an equal emphasis on collective achievement. The classroom itself needs to be set up as a caring community to help students experience patience, tolerance, an understanding of the needs of others and to relate to the larger human community. Schaps and Soloman (1985/1986) further state that schools must be caring communities in which all students are valued. They found that, generally, the greater the sense of community in a class the better the pro-social values. Kohn (1991) suggests that social responsibility should not address the individual child but the child as he relates to a group or community. "More precisely, the idea is not just to internalize good values in a community

but to internalize the value of community." (Kohn, 1991 p.501)

The discussion involving the importance of peer pressure on social skills is addressed by Johnson, et al. when they state, "Peer relationships are a critical element in the development and socialization of children and adolescents." (1990 p.21) These researchers also contend that teachers often have held the adult-centric view that children's peer relationships are unimportant or even harmful. Student interaction is viewed as disruptive and student-to-student relationships are de-emphasized, but constructive relationships with peers are imperative to development and socialization in children.

Research indicates many strong reasons to employ cooperative learning in teaching social skills. Cooperative learning has been extensively researched since the beginning of this century with over 600 studies being conducted by a wide variety of researchers. Much more is known about cooperative learning than almost any other facet of education. (Johnson, et al. 1990) Kohn (1991 p.504) states, "By creating interdependence and a built-in incentive to help, cooperative learning promotes pro-social behavior."

Cooperative learning has many positive aspects which relate to social skills. The following is a list of the characteristics of cooperative learning supported by the research:

1. Cooperative learning has "the potential to help

students feel good about themselves, feel good about each other, feel good about what they are learning and learn more effectively." (Kohn, 1991 p.503-504)

2. Social skills must be modeled. (Johnson and Johnson, 1989/1990)

3. Social skills must be practiced with the goal of integrating them into student behavior patterns. (Johnson and Johnson, 1989/1990)

4. Cooperative learning produces a caring commitment among students. (Brandt, 1987)

5. Cooperative learning promotes more positive peer relationships and better social skills. (Brandt, 1987)

6. One of the five basic elements of cooperative learning is social skills in which "each student must communicate effectively, provide leadership for the group's work, build and maintain trust among group members, and resolve conflicts within the group constructively." (Johnson and Johnson, 1989 p.80)

7. Frequent cooperative learning activities achieve both character development and academic excellence. (Wynne and Walberg, 1985/1986)

8. " Cooperative learning groups can also encourage students to practice politeness, tact, loyalty and other virtues." (Wynne and Walberg, 1985/1986 p.17)

9. "Cooperative learning promotes a sense of group identity, a greater acceptance of people who are different

from oneself and a more sophisticated ability to imagine other people's point of view." (Kohn, 1991 p.504)

10. Cooperative learning encourages the feelings of support, acceptance, concern and commitment that are part of collaborative situations to achieve a common goal. (Johnson, et al. 1990)

11. Cooperative learning helps students have a more positive attitude toward the teacher. (Johnson, et al. 1990)

12. Cooperative learning increases students self esteem. (Slavin, 1991)

The literature search included many strategies that should be employed when teaching social skills through cooperative learning.

Research suggests that problem solving strategies should be specifically taught to promote pro-social behavior in students. Specific programs were identified to meet this need. The Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum, which is available to the researcher, closely parallels the programs referred to in literature. The curriculum includes empathy training, impulse control and anger management. The Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum utilizes role playing and guided class discussion as strategies to teach social skills. Berman (1990) suggests role playing as a way to help students see the perspective of others and to develop social consciousness as a tool to help resolve conflicts. Practice can help students develop the ability to see the point of view

of others, to be open to change and compromise and to understand that their choices and actions have important implications.

To promote social understanding, Schaps, Solomon and Watson (1985/1986) recommend using spontaneous events such as fights and misunderstandings as "a basis for discussions and negotiations that help children to understand the other person's feeling and point of view. Regular class activities are designed to enhance understanding of other's motives, feelings, intentions, perceptions, and customs." (1985/1986 p.34)

Lasley (1987) further adds that students interact by using problem solving strategies to find solutions to chronic behavior problems. Through discussion and reflection, students work to identify alternatives that would be appropriate solutions to conflict and that would ultimately produce healthy peer relationships.

Elias and Clabby (1988) describe a successful program which is similar to the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum. In explaining the program, they state that students are taught an ordered sequence of skills to use to "analyze, understand and prepare to respond to everyday problems, decisions and conflicts". (1988 p.53) Through practice in using these skills, students become more capable of making decisions in high-pressure situations. These skills emphasize self-control and a sense of group awareness that

enables a "readiness" when faced with problems.

In summary, research suggests that teaching practices to advance social skills should include cooperative learning structures and programs which specifically teach conflict resolution such as the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum. These structures can be used to present factual information on course content and also be designed to enhance social skills. The solution strategies emphasize that schools are an appropriate place to teach social skills. The classroom is an ideal place to employ cooperative learning and the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum to teach the curriculum and also teach social skills. Cooperative learning and the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum address all the following solution strategies found in literature.

1. Appropriate social skills must be modeled by the teacher.

2. Children must have opportunities to practice social responsibility.

3. Schools should be caring communities in which the needs of the individual are balanced with the needs of the community.

4. Many opportunities should be given for constructive peer relationships which are imperative to the healthy social development of children.

Group work has long been part of the researcher's repertoire of teaching strategies, and cooperative learning

has been casually used since the fall of 1992. The Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum was used during the last six weeks of the 1992-1993 school year after a district required workshop was completed. Children entering the researcher's class at the beginning of the 1993-1994 school year will generally have little cooperative learning training and varying degrees of training in the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum.

Project Outcomes

The terminal objectives of this problem intervention were related to the discrepancy data presented in Chapter 2, which state that the student population exhibits poor social skills that affect both learning and behavior. Probable cause data presented in the latter part of Chapter 2, and solution strategies presented in the first part of this chapter suggest the need for improving social skills, including conflict resolution, in students.

Therefore:

> As a result of the implementation of cooperative learning, during the period, October, 1993 through February 1994, the target group will demonstrate an increase in cooperative skills as measured by teacher observation and student self-assessment.
>
> As a result of the implementation of the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum, during the period, October, 1993, through February, 1994, the target group will demonstrate an increased skill in conflict resolution, as measured by teacher observation and student self-assessment.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following process objectives defined the major strategic procedures proposed for problem resolution.

1) As a result of designing lessons on cooperative learning to address students' social interaction skills, the teacher will implement activities that focus on the improvement of behavior.

2) As a result of the use of the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum, the target group will show an increase in ability to manage anger, control impulses and empathize.

Proposal Solution Components

The major elements of the approach used to reduce the discrepancy were strategic interventions to improve social skills and conflict resolution by using cooperative learning and the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum. These elements related to the terminal objectives in that they attempted to effect an increased use of positive social skills. Discrepancy data indicated: a lack of appropriate social skills; and probable cause data indicated that the influence of the school, church and family in teaching moral values has weakened, students lack models and opportunities to practice appropriate social skills, students are preoccupied with themselves and lack a sense of community, the media and peer groups are negative influences, and there is a general lack of obedience to legitimate authority.

Chapter 4

ACTION PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Description of Problem Resolution Activities

The action plan is designed to address two major solution components: cooperative learning and the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum. The target groups will be given a social skills questionnaire in which the questions relate to the social skills of assertion, empathy and self-control. This questionnaire will be used as pre-test in September, 1993 and a post-test in February, 1994.

The cooperative learning component will begin in October, 1993. The purpose of this component is to stress the need for and awareness of social skills and to practice the skills during cooperative learning lessons and apply them to daily life.

The Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum component will begin in late September, 1993. The purpose of this component is to improve the social skills of empathy, impulse control, and anger management.

The implementation plan follows:

1. Administer social skills questionnaire.

The teacher will administer the student social skills questionnaire to the fourth grade target class during the second week of school. After an explanation of the purpose of

the questionnaire, the benefits of answering the questions honestly will be discussed. The students will be asked not to put their name on the questionnaire, and the answering procedure will be discussed. The teacher will read each question to the class to eliminate problems concerned with reading ability. The questionnaire will provide self-assessment of each student before intervention begins.

2. Provide students with social skills awareness and practice.

Initial discussions will provide a basis for the understanding of the need for the use of appropriate social skills. The importance of the appropriate use of social skills in daily life will be emphasized. The concentration of practice will be on six specific social skills that will later be used in cooperative learning groups. Other skills will be incorporated as need and opportunity arises. During the last three weeks in September, T-charts, webs, posters, discussions, and modeling will be used to present practice and reinforce the following social skills: six inch voices, do your job, help each other, encourage others, listen with focus, respect each other's opinions.

3. Implement cooperative learning groups.

During the months of October, 1993 through February, 1994, cooperative groups will be formed and lessons will be presented using cooperative learning at least two times a week. Each week the teacher will decide which lessons will be

most conducive to using with the groups. Each social skill will be reviewed and reinforced before the cooperative learning sessions. Probable topics which will be presented for cooperative learning include: continents, map work, subtraction renaming, rocks and crystals and the food chain.

4. Implement the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum. The Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum will be used two times a week. The classroom will be rearranged before the presentation so the students will be able to sit on the floor in front of the teacher. The curriculum will be presented in the order prescribed by the manual beginning with empathy training and followed by discussions and role playing in topics concerning impulse control and anger management. Empathy training includes the ability to determine the emotional state of another person, assume the perspective and role of another person, and respond emotionally to another person. Impulse control training involves problem solving and behavioral skills training. Anger management is approached through teaching stress reduction techniques.

5. Journal entries will be made by the teacher as specific intervention proceeds.

6. The teacher will conference with action research partner at the end of each month concerning problems and successes of the intervention strategy.

7. The Social Skills Questionnaire will again be administered. The results will be compared with the first

questionnaire which was administered at the beginning of the intervention.

Method of Assessment

A variety of data collection methods will be used in order to assess the effects of intervention. Change in social skills ability levels will be measured through the use of the social skills questionnaire. This questionnaire will be administered to the target group in September, 1993 as a pre-test, and the results will be compared to the questionnaire administered in February, 1994.

The ability of the students to improve in their use of appropriate social skills will be documented through informal class assessment and journal entries.

Chapter 5

EVALUATION OF RESULTS AND PROCESS

Implementation History

The terminal objectives of the intervention addressed the low levels of appropriate use of social skills by the fourth grade target group. Evidence of the lack of self-discipline and incidences of inappropriate behavior noted by teacher observation revealed a critical need for intense and purposeful teaching of basic social skills. Therefore the terminal objectives stated:

> As a result of the implementation of cooperative learning, during the period, October, 1993 through February 1994, the target group will demonstrate an increase in cooperative skills as measured by teacher observation and student self-assessment.
>
> As a result of the implementation of the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum, during the period, October, 1993, through February, 1994, the target group will demonstrate an increased skill in conflict resolution, as measured by teacher observation and student self-assessment.

The development of a curriculum to address the lack of use of appropriate social skills began with a social skills questionnaire pretest given to the target students before intervention (Table 4). Data from the questionnaire showed that a low percentage of the target students perceived themselves as having very weak social skills. The four subgroups of assertion, cooperation, empathy and self control,

addressed by the questionnaire did not reveal a need for social skills improvement. However, teacher observation definitely indicated a strong need for social skill improvement.

A survey (Appendix A) taken by the professional staff of the researcher's school also yielded evidence of the problem. Responses showed that students were very weak in making appropriate responses in negative situations and in temper control.

Intervention with the target group began in early September, 1993 with discussions and activities that placed major emphasis on the meaning and need for cooperation both in and out of the classroom. The purpose and scope of the intervention was explained by the researcher to an appropriate degree. The target students were interested and showed an understanding of the need for improvement in the use of appropriate social skills.

Presentation and Analysis of Project Results

In order to assess the effects of the planned intervention, the same Social Skills Questionnaire (Appendix B) which had been given to the target students as a pretest in September, 1993, was given as a posttest in March, 1994. The pretest is summarized in Table 4. The posttest in summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Posttest Responses of Fourth Grade Students to Social Skills Questionnaire Number of Responses and Percent September, 1993

Question Category	Never		Sometimes		Very Often	
	%	# of Responses	%	# of Responses	%	# of Responses
Cooperation	6	13	65	144	29	63
Assertion	8	17	55	120	37	83
Empathy	3	6	49	108	48	106
Self Control	16	36	61	136	22	49

The pre and post social skills questionnaire pre and post test (Tables 4 and 5) were administered to the target students in a non-threatening way. Students were encouraged to be thoughtful and candid in responding to the questions. Students were asked not to put their names on the questionnaire.

The data from Table 5 indicate a substantial change from the results of the pretest(Table 4). The response of "Never" and "Sometimes" increased in all four social skill categories. The response of "Very often" decreased in all four categories.

A comparison of the results of the social skills questionnaire pre and post tests is summarized in Table 6.

Table 6
Percent of Responses of Fourth Grade Students to
Pre and Post Social Skills Questionnaire
September, 1993 - March, 1994

Question Category	Never		Sometimes		Very Often	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Cooperation	2	6	41	65	57	29
Assertion	4	8	49	55	48	37
Empathy	2	3	41	49	57	48
Self Control	9	16	50	61	42	22

The data in Table 6 clearly shows the substantial differences scores of the pre and post social skills questionnaire. the percentage of the target students who perceived themselves as having very weak social skills by answering "Never" increased in each category. The percentage o responses by the target group in the category of "Very often" decreased substantially in each category. This decrease indicates that the number of target students who had perceived themselves as having string social skills when the pretest was administered in September, 1993, changed after the intervention period which ended in early March, 1994. The percent of responses of "Sometimes" by the target students increased in all question categories and accounts for the percent decrease in the "Very often" responses. The comparison table shows that the greatest number of students

felt that their weakest social skill was self-control and that empathy was the strongest social skill. From this information, it appears that their social skills got worse. In reality, awareness of social skills and their presence or absence increased. This finding is supported by teacher observation.

To begin intervention, the researcher constructed a bulletin board which displayed the word cooperation in large letters. The target students then brainstormed a list of 27 components of the word. The 27 components were:

1. Listen
2. Follow directions.
3. Be friendly.
4. Get along.
5. Take turns.
6. Be kind.
7. Be thoughtful.
8. Don't interrupt.
9. Share.
10. Use quiet voices.
11. Play carefully.
12. Help each other.
13. Do your job.
14. Don't use put downs.
15. Praise others.
16. Work together.
17. Give compliments.
18. Keep Trying.
19. Give explanations.
20. Respect others.
21. Smile.
22. Ask questions.
23. Contribute.
24. Give encouragement.
25. Apologize when necessary.
26. Avoid fights.
27. Offer help.

After the brainstorming session, the researcher named groups of two to work together to complete the bulletin board

by using colored paper to create banners to display the many components of cooperation as shown on the brainstormed list. Each group of two was asked to create at least two banners. One member of the group was assigned to role of getting supplies. The other member was assigned the job of printing the banner. Both members were to reach an agreement as to which components to use.

To complete the first very basic cooperative learning effort, the researcher asked each group how the partners helped each other. The processing was shared with the entire class.

The next activity was a continuation of the first. The target group was again paired off, but with different partners. This time the assignment was to create a mobile to display important cooperative words with the word cooperation at the top of each mobile. Before the cooperative effort began, the social skill of using quiet voices was discussed and modeled. Roles were again assigned, and processing was completed at the end of the activity.

The purpose of the first two introductory activities was to create a goal awareness and to give the target students the opportunity to begin to feel an ownership for the goal.

In an effort to move step by step into cooperative learning familiarity, the researcher assigned groups of four to work together to list all the words they could find by using the letters contained in the words, Cooperative

Learning. The social skill of using quiet voices was reviewed and modeled and now labeled as using six inch voices. The students were told that each time a group received a check for not using six inch voices, one word would be subtracted from the list of words. The roles of recorder, worrier, encourager and supply person were explained and assigned. A 15 minute time limit was given to the activity. At the end of the activity, lists were checked for duplication and words counted and compared to the number of words found by each group.

As the target group worked, the excitement and feeling of competition among the groups was very evident. Each group and most group members were working as quickly as possible to find more words than the other groups. One group decided to use a dictionary and the other groups followed. The worrier and, in fact, all group members reminded each other, even in their excitement, to use six-inch voices so the other groups would not hear words and lists would not have words deducted from them. Because of the great enthusiasm and hard work displayed by the students, the request to extend the time limit for ten more minutes was granted by the researcher.

The monitoring for the use of six-inch voices did result in the loss of a few words for several groups. At the end of the activity, words were counted after misspelled words and duplicated words were eliminated. The total number of words found by each group showed a narrow rage. The greatest number of correct words listed by a group was 92.

This word-finding activity, which ended up having much more flexibility than originally intended by the researcher, turned out to be both a cooperative and a competitive lesson. The use of the targeted social skill for this lesson was quite successful. In processing how groups felt about this activity, the key words were, "exciting" and "fun".

The second social skill to be targeted in the intervention was that of active listening. To introduce this social skill a T-chart (Appendix C) was used. A detailed discussion along with non-listening versus active listening models were used. The T-chart was displayed in the classroom for future reference.

The social skill of active listening was first used in the cooperative learning activity called Picture Frame. The picture frame is similar to a Venn diagram and achieves the same result, that of comparing and contrasting. To begin this activity, six students were chosen to pick three other students to be members of a group. A whole-class discussion followed in which ways four individuals could be alike, as well as, different in many ways. Roles were assigned to each group member and the targeted social skills of using six inch voices and active listening were re-emphasized. The assignment of producing a picture frame showing the similarities and differences of the four group members was accomplished satisfactorily by all the groups. The activity, however, did not lend well to achieving success in using the

targeted social skills. Not surprisingly, group members were very interested in talking about themselves. A great deal of continual encouragement and many reminders were necessary to help the groups use the targeted social skills. In processing with the whole class at the end of the activity, the statement made by one of the students that it was just a bad day may have been very true. Individual processing (Appendix D) also frequently revealed that the social skills were not used appropriately.

The next formal cooperative learning activity again focused on the social skills of six-inch voices and active listening. The active listening T-chart was reviewed, and the first try at active listening, which had failed, was recalled and discussed. The students were determined to be successful.

Groups of three were assigned for this map activity which was a culmination of a unit on continents. Groups were given direction to create a map showing the seven continents and the oceans.

In processing this activity, all groups were proud to say they had worked together well because they had listened to each other.

After orally reading and discussing a basic reader story, the entire reading group discussed the comprehension check questions at the end of the story. The members of the reading group had individually answered the comprehension questions several times before with a great deal of guided instruction

to write the answers in complete sentences. Because some students were obviously more capable in achieving this goal, pairs were chosen carefully to insure peer help in this assignment. The pair was to decide who would do the writing and who would check for capitals and periods and complete sentences. Each member of the pair was to sign the completed assignment signifying that they both agreed that the questions were answered correctly in complete sentences with correct punctuation. The targeted social skills for this cooperative learning lesson were again to use six-inch voices an to listen actively. Processing included completing three reflective questions concerning the use of social skills.

The target group did cooperative group reflections after a field trip to an art museum. The PMI chart had been used with the entire class several times before the field trip, so students were familiar with it. In this lesson groups of three students with assigned roles of recorder, worrier and encourager reflected on the field trip by using a PMI chart. (Appendix E) Again, the social skills of six-inch voices and active listening were reviewed and expected. The students were told that they would be monitored specifically for eye contact and nods, two important components of active listening, during this cooperative learning activity.

The social skill lesson was a success as students made a great deal of effort to make eye contact and nod when appropriate. An oral group discussion followed the lesson.

Each recorder shared the PMI chart. Each worrier evaluated the six-inch voices. Each encourager evaluated the active listening.

One focus of the target school is visual communication. Each class in the school works in the VISCOM lab with the classroom teacher and the VISCOM teacher 45 minutes per week. Often students culminate a unit by making a presentation during this 45 minute period in front of television cameras.

In this case, the target students had requested the chance to present commercials in the VISCOM Lab during the next session. Because of the great interest generated by the request, discussions, modeling and role playing sessions were implemented to create awareness of the task the students had requested.

A number of ideas for commercials had been over heard by the researcher as students chatted with each other. Many of the ideas were much to grand and difficult to carry out. In an effort to stop ideas from being stifled when group work began, the researcher felt it was an appropriate time to introduce the social skill of encouragement. To teach the social skill, a T-chart was used. (Appendix F) After thinking through the behavior lists of what encouragement sounds like and looks like, some role-playing was done.

This lesson to introduce the social skill of encouragement was not actually planned at the time. It was presented quickly because of the time element. The researcher

did not have high expectations of the success of its appropriate use in the cooperative groups. The social skills of using quiet voices and listening actively were also reviewed before the groups began working on their ideas.

Many of the target students had previously discussed ideas for making a commercial with fellow classmates. Because of this, students were allowed to work with a partner or partners of their choice.

The task of the first cooperative learning session was for the groups of two to four students to decide upon the subject of the commercial, the props to be used and the basic set up of the actual presentation. Guidelines were agreed upon. The commercial must try to sell a new product, include props, and last no longer than one minute. Students were made aware that social skills would be monitored very closely. The apprehensions of the researcher in this quickly-put-together lesson were honestly shared with the students. The students gave assurance of their understanding and said that they would use social skills appropriately.

The careful monitoring of the appropriate use of the targeted social skills during this cooperative learning lesson was the key to its success. The students took it as a challenge to prove to the researcher that they could do a good job with this lesson which had been their idea. They had somehow, without a specific attempt, formed a group effort to establish the fact that the uncertain attitude of the

researcher was not warranted. This bond that the students had achieved led to the use of excellent social skills during the cooperative learning effort. Comments such as "Look at my eyes," "Great idea," "That would work," and "We're talking to loud," were noted frequently by the researcher. Also noted were nods, smiles, eye contact and thumbs up. Students often used the displayed T-charts on active listening and encouragement as a reference. Smirks on the faces of the students as they were aware of the monitoring by the researcher brought across the attitude of "We'll show you we can do this."

Of course, not every student put total effort into using the targeted social skills. By yielding to peer pressure, even the handful of students who were not quite aware of what was going on, followed and participated in the use of appropriate social skills.

In retrospect, this unplanned situation that literally fell together was a social skills lesson in itself. The type of bonding and feeling and the effort displayed by the students does not occur frequently and is a very precious part of being a teacher.

Cooperative learning sessions continued during the next three days to complete preparations for the commercials. The same social skills were expected and carried out with somewhat different guidelines as the daily tasks progressed to achieve a finished product. Monitoring continued throughout each

session. After each session a few minutes were spent to analyze the use of social skills. Positive and negative ideas were shared and alternatives were suggested when necessary.

As the students practiced for their presentations, cooperative group and class discussions were added whenever the researcher felt it was appropriate or necessary. As spontaneous discussions developed, students began recalling previous experiences in the VISCOM Lab. They had been encouraged to look at the camera when appropriate, stand up straight, smile, ignore mistakes and go on, and be a good audience. With a little prompting and cues, students reached the conclusion that the ways they presented themselves in from of the camera and as an audience were also important social skills. Also, as groups practiced by presenting their commercial to their classmates, the social skill of giving and taking constructive criticism appropriately was focused upon. Again the time element was a factor in the degree to which this skill could be practices at this time.

After presentations were made in the VISCOM Lab, time was taken to reflect both orally and in writing on the entire process that had followed during the four days prior to the actual presentation of the commercial. The written processing was requested from individual students and then shared with group members. (Appendix G)

The next cooperative learning lesson which continued to target the social skills of six-inch voices, active listening

and encouragement was a line jig-saw used as a means to learn reading vocabulary words and definitions. This was a first-time activity for the researcher and the target students. In this activity two lines of students faced each other and taught the student facing them the vocabulary word and definition for which they were responsible. The lines rotated so each student taught one word and definition to all the other students. It was stressed that each student was accountable to all the other students, and by working together, all students would learn all the vocabulary words in a short time.

The students were generally successful in teaching each other the vocabulary words. The problem with this activity was that it was very difficult to keep voices quiet. Because of the lack of enough room to spread out, students were quite close to each other and had to speak loudly enough so partners could hear over neighbors.

In reflecting about this activity, students felt that they were able to teach each other the vocabulary words because they made an effort to focus on their partner and keep eye contact. Both the students and the researcher found the noise level of this activity uncomfortable.

A newspaper search was used as a cooperative learning lesson after basic concepts of the organization of a newspaper were taught. Cooperative groups of two or three shared the newspaper which had four basic sections. Questions had been

written for which answers could be found in various sections of the newspaper. Each cooperative group received a question with which to begin. Questions were then traded so all groups worked on finding the answer to each. Questions included all levels of thinking skills.

Prior to the cooperative group effort, roles were assigned and social skills reviewed and discussed. Because the target group had had some problems using six-inch voices successfully, the researcher requested that whispers be used during this lesson. Students were asked to speak and feel the vibrations on their necks, and than whisper to discover that there were no vibrations. Each group member was given the duty of helping other members remember to whisper. The social skills of active listening and encouragement were also part of this lesson.

The use of whispers was not always successful during the lesson, but a good effort was make and the improvement was obvious. A motivating factor in using whispers became a natural part of this lesson because students did not want to other groups to hear the answers being found. The researcher observed the use of active listening and encouragement skills as groups were monitored. Good discussion, analyzing and team work were also noted by the researcher. In processing the newspaper search lesson, each group completed sentences describing the group effort. (Appendix H)

In the following two cooperative learning lessons, the

researcher continued to emphasize the use of whispers by monitoring the target groups. The persistent monitoring proved successful in keeping voices at a minimum volume.

In an effort to stress the importance of active listening, time was used once again to model and role play appropriate and inappropriate listening skills before presenting the next cooperative learning lesson. During the lesson the researcher closely monitored the listening skills being used by the groups. Reflections concerning active listening skills were written by each student on a "Please Listen to Me" form. (Appendix I)

In an effort to limit disputes during cooperative learning lessons, a T-chart for constructive criticism was used before the presentation of a lesson which centered around folktales. The discussion, modeling and role playing of this social skill created a great deal of interest. Students had fun negatively role-playing this social skill with great exaggeration. They were aware of what they were doing wrong, and they did it very well. Positive role-playing of the social skill of constructive criticism was forced and unnatural, but it guided the students into a very successful cooperative effort with no arguments.

The Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum was also implemented by the researcher as a solution strategy. The curriculum is a set of lessons designed to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior and, at the same time, increase social

competence levels through discussion, modeling, practice and reinforcement. The focus of the program is to develop skills in empathy, impulse control and anger management. Each lesson is presented in sequence and builds on previous lessons. The lesson focus centers around 11" X 17" lesson cards which have a situational photograph on the front for the students and a story and detailed scripted lesson on the back to be used by the teacher. (Appendix J) It is recommended that the teacher stick to the scripted lesson. Each lesson also provides role plays or an activity along with follow-up and reinforcement skills.

In order to provide a comfortable relaxed atmosphere along with making room for the role plays and activities, the target group moved desks aside and sat on the floor in front of the teacher for each Second Step session. The first session of the program provides structure with which to set behavioral guidelines to be followed during the sessions.

The empathy training focuses on the several teaching strategies. Students learn to:

a) identify feelings from body language and situational cues.

b) recognize that people may have different feelings about the same thing.

c) recognize that feelings change.

d) predict feelings.

e) recognize preferences.

f) differentiate intentional from unintentional acts.

g) communicate by using "I" messages.

h) express concern and care for others.

The lessons encourage growth in awareness, predicting, consequential thinking, perspective taking and the use of important communication and problem solving skills.

The second unit of the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum deals with impulse control. The lessons are presented in much the same way as those in the previous unit.

The impulse control unit deals with the following behaviors:

a) dealing with wanting something that isn't yours,

b) keeping a promise,

c) giving and receiving compliments,

d) making conversation,

e) dealing with fear,

f) taking responsibility for your actions,

g) resisting the temptation to steal,

h) resisting the impulse to lie or cheat,

i) dealing with peer pressure,

j) dealing with gossip.

Along with the same teaching strategies used in the empathy unit, the impulse control unit adds brainstorming, thinking out loud, and dialoging.

The last unit of the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum deals with anger management. This unit was not covered during the action research implementation.

Reflections and Conclusions

Beginning on the first day of school and throughout the entire intervention period, the use of appropriate social skills was integrated into every possible aspect of the school day. The researcher explained the Master's Program and the action research project to the classroom students during the first week of school. Concerns about social skills were described along with the planned intervention and the intended outcome.

The target students were not familiar with structured cooperative learning activates, but some were aware of the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum because they had been introduced to it the previous year.

The intervention began and ended with a social skills questionnaire administered to the target students. The scoring of the post test showed a substantial decrease in the percentage of social skill strengths in all categories. It is the conclusion of the researcher that the decrease did not occur because the appropriate use of social skills exacerbated during intervention, but because the students were much more knowledgeable about the appropriate use of social skills. Therefore, the target students had criteria on which to base their answers which they did not have when they answered the same questions on the pretest. Because of the outcome of the pre and post social skills questionnaire, it is assumed that at the very minimum, an awareness of appropriate social skills

was achieved during intervention.

Upon examination of the comparison of scores for specific questions in the questionnaire, it was found that the tally stayed the same or increased for only eight questions on the post test. An interesting fact was that of those eight, four questions were in the category of empathy. As previously stated, empathy training, as presented in the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum, was a major focus of the intervention. Using this information along with observations make by the researcher, it is concluded that there was an increase in awareness and use of empathic behavior by some of the target students.

Intervention using cooperative learning lessons was presented at a slow rate, consistently building on the social skills presented in previous lessons. The social skills of quiet voices, active listening, encouragement, and constructive criticism were purposely taught through discussion, modeling, role playing and practice. Targeted social skills were reviewed before each lesson. Reflections were made on the use of the skill in previous lessons with emphasis on how to remedy problems that had occurred. T-charts for each social skill were on display and students were persistently encouraged to use them as instant reminders of how the social skill looked and sounded.

As the students became more capable of using the targeted social skills in cooperative learning groups, they were guided

into the awareness that the same social skills needed to be used in daily lives. Students were encouraged to praise each other when appropriate social skills were used in the classroom and throughout the school day.

The empathy training presented in the first unit of the Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum was easily associated with the social skills being taught in cooperative groups. The skills presented in the empathy training, along with the lessons, greatly helped to broaden the view of the social skills being taught in cooperative groups. The lessons gave the students experience in discussing pros and cons, making connections with their own background, brainstorming solutions, and practicing skills that help to increase social competence.

The social skills needed for successful cooperative learning experiences improved in varying degrees throughout the intervention period. Re-teaching of the social skills and modifications were constantly necessary. Both success and failure was experienced throughout the intervention period by the researcher and the target students. There were many unanticipated rewards and set-backs, but there is no question that a great deal was accomplished.

Chapter 6

DECISIONS ON THE FUTURE

The Solution Strategy

The data indicate that the purposeful teaching of social skills should be continued. The use of cooperative learning and t Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum, at the very least, helped create a basic awareness of appropriate social skill use.

The major focus of this intervention was to empower the target group, through the acquisition of skills and information, to increase their social skill competence.

Additional Applications

My observations have led me to the conclusion that in order to make strides in improvement, social skills must be purposely taught and integrated into the curriculum at all grade levels. I found that my intervention helped students take positive steps toward becoming more competent in using appropriate social skills. Many negative incidents during the intervention brought on momentary thoughts that everything we had done made no difference. In addressing these situations, I found that a great deal of patience and persistence was necessary and beneficial. I believe that the constant reminders of alternatives and the continuous application of appropriate social skills led, in varying degrees, to

strengthening the competence my students had in approaching daily situations. My hope is that something my students experienced, practiced and learned during my intervention will be a basis for them to continue growth in using appropriate social skills.

Dissemination of Data and Recommendations

Intervention has confirmed for me, the importance of purposely teaching the appropriate use of social skills. My observation throughout the intervention period have shown progress to some degree in all my students.

My experience in the use of formal cooperative learning groups was very limited when intervention began. Because I approached it slowly and methodically, my students and I were not uncomfortable. Students were aware of my lack of experience and readily accepted successes and failures as a learning process for all of us. As the intervention period progressed, and we became more skillful, improvement was evident. The feeling that we were learning together seemed to create a bond among the students to make an effort to show me they could do it.

The Second Step Violence-Prevention Curriculum turned out to be a natural support of the use of cooperative learning to teach social skills. Connections between the two intervention strategies were readily made. The overlap between the two gave strength to both.

Spontaneous intervention turned out to be a very

important reason for the success I observed. Because my students were very aware of my purpose, they were often able to build on my intervention during negative situations. There definitely were disappointments and set-backs, but to learn from them and improve in the future was a constant goal.

Along with the observed growth in the appropriate use of social skills, other skills were developed during this intervention. My students became more adept in working in cooperative learning groups. Organizational time was reduced, leaving more time for the lesson itself. There was evidence of a definite maturing when my students worked one-on-one with students in lower grades. I became more skillful and at ease when using the teaching methods of my intervention.

I am convinced that before any improvement can be expected from students, they first must be made aware of the appropriate use of social skills. That awareness can be achieved by persistent formal and informal modeling and practice.

Overall, I would label my intervention during this action research project not only successful but also a heartwarming experience. The skill and knowledge I have gained will be very useful as I continue to integrate social skills into my basic curriculum.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Teacher Survey

Dear teachers,

The subject of our action research project for our master's program is that the lack of social skills is a major problem with our students.

We would greatly appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to complete the attached questionnaire. Feel free to add any thoughts you might have.

Please return to Kathy or Karen's mailbox by Friday, May 14.

Thank You,

Kathy Pirrello

Karen Wilson

Why are social skills poorly developed? Choose the ten reasons you think are most valid and prioritize 1-10 with number one (1) being most important.

____ Low self esteem
____ Lack of exposure to appropriate social skills
____ Immaturity
____ Lack of decision making skills
____ Lack of emphasis on social skills in school
____ Lack of emphasis on social skills in the home
____ Lack of commitment and goals
____ Lack of obedience to legitimate authority
____ Lack of sense of responsibility to community
____ Lack of consideration for others
____ Lack of modeling of social skills
____ Lack of practice using social skills with guidance
____ Lack of experience in problem solving
____ Inappropriate behavior has become more acceptable
____ Teachers have lower expectations because of little support from parents.
____ Teachers have lower expectations because of little support from top administration
____ Lack of empathy
____ Importance of self versus others
____ Peer pressure
____ Television
____ Other_____

Overall, which do you consider to be the weakest social skills in your students. Prioritize 1-9 with number one (1) being the weakest.

____ Temper control
____ Ability to compromise— –
____ Ability to follow directions
____ Distractibility
____ Appropriate responses to negative situations
____ Appropriate responses to positive situations
____ Ability to work well with others
____ Friendliness
____ Kindness

_____ Please enter the grade level of your students or teaching area.

SOCIAL SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE

This paper lists a lot of things that students your age may do. Please read each sentence and think about yourself. Then decide how often you do the behavior described.

If you never do this behavior, circle the 0.
If you sometimes do this behavior, circle the 1.
If you very often do this behavior, circle the 2

SOCIAL SKILLS	How often		
	never	sometimes	very often
1. I make friends very easily.	0	1	2
2. I smile, wave, or nod at others.	0	1	2
3. I ask before using other people's things.	0	1	2
4. I ignore classmates who are clowning around in class.	0	1	2
5. I feel sorry for others when bad things happen to them.	0	1	2
6. I tell others when I am upset with them.	0	1	2
7. I disagree with adults without fighting or arguing.	0	1	2
8. I keep my desk clean and neat.	0	1	2
9. I am active in school activities such as sports or clubs.	0	1	2
10. I do my homework on time.	0	1	2
11. I tell new people my name without being asked to tell it.	0	1	2
12. I control my temper when people are angry with me.	0	1	2
13. I politely question rules that may be unfair.	0	1	2
14. I let friends know I like them by telling or showing them.	0	1	2
15. I listen to adults when they are talking with me.	0	1	2
16. I show that I like compliments or praise from friends.	0	1	2
17. I listen to my friends when they talk about problems they are having.	0	1	2
18. I avoid doing things with others that may get me in trouble with adults.	0	1	2
19. I end fights with my parents calmly.	0	1	2
20. I say nice things to others when they have done something well.	0	1	2
21. I listen to the teacher when a lesson is being taught.	0	1	2
22. I finish classwork on time.	0	1	2
23. I start talks with class members.	0	1	2
24. I tell adults when they have done something for me that I like.	0	1	2

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25. I follow the teacher's directions. ——— 0 1 2
26. I try to understand how my friends feel when they are angry, upset, or sad. ——— 0 1 2
27. I ask friends for help with my problems. ——— 0 1 2
28. I ignore other children when they tease me or call me names. ——— 0 1 2
29. I accept people who are different. ——— 0 1 2
30. I use my free time in a good way. ——— 0 1 2
31. I ask classmates to join in an activity or game. ——— 0 1 2
32. I use a nice tone of voice in classroom discussions. ——— 0 1 2
33. I ask adults for help when other children try to hit me or push me around. ——— 0 1 2
34. I talk things over with classmates when there is a problem or argument. ——— 0 1 2

STOP. PLEASE CHECK TO BE SURE ALL ITEMS HAVE BEEN MARKED

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Appendix C Listening T-Chart

ATTENTIVE LISTENING	
SOUNDS LIKE	LOOKS LIKE
1. "uh huh"	1. eyes alert and focused on talker
2. "I see."	2. mirroring emotions
3. clarifying questions	3. leaning forward/toward speaker
4. silence	4. head nods at right time
5. paraphrasing	5. taking notes

October 5, 1993

Pictureframe

group members
Jenny
Andrea
Vanessa
Dice
my role was supply person.

1. My group worked well together because we worked a little quiet didn't fight, and we took turns.

2. My group could of did good voices, and could of used behave in the class, instead of yelling.

3. I did my job well because I told them to take turns with the marker and take turns writing.

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Plus +	Minus -	Interesting
1. Some of Picture. 2. people was good. 3. The stichs. 4. Lunch was good. 5. Know closes people 6. the listing 7. explaining 8. doing job 9. giting along 10. people was having Fun. 11. this class was good.	1. Peaple was bad. 2. Peaple was tolucking. 3. running. 4. talking. 5. the Fighting. 6. Not coopeiate 7. Not rasing hand. 8. Not smiling 9. Not interrupt 10. Not Following directions the first time. 11. people was eating gum.	1. The pictures. 2. the canies. 3. the people. 4. the bathrooms. 5. the artis. 6. the Frame 7. helping each other. 8. ask Questions 9. how the paple talk. 10. the down stirs. 11. Some pictures had dot.
72		73

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Appendix F Encouragement T-Chart

T-Chart

ENCOURAGEMENT

SOUNDS LIKE	LOOKS LIKE
"Keep at it."	thumbs up
"Atta girl," "Atta boy!"	pat on back
"Way to go!"	smile
"Here's another way to look at it ..."	head nodding
"Great idea."	beckoning hand
"Keep trying."	
"You're getting close."	

November 4, 1993

Commercials

My partner and I did well on keeping together.

One thing that didn't work was that Josh kept on talking.

I will give our 6" voices a grade of. A-

Our team did well on ~~cooperating~~ listing and following the rules.

The hardest part for our team was loud noises in the team.

MORE OF THE SAME WORKSHEET

Please Listen to Me

1. How well did I listen to others in my group?

1	2	3	4	5	(6)	7
I wasn't listening at all.			Sometimes I listened.			I listened very carefully to others.

I let others know I was listening by . . . folowing along what they read.

I could have been a better listener by . . . stop talking

2. How well was I listened to by others in my group?

1	2	3	4	5	6	(7)
I wasn't listened to at all.			Sometimes I was listened to.			My ideas were carefully listened to.

Someone made me feel listened to by . . . because she followed alone with me

Someone made me feel I wasn't listened to because they . . . didn't want to hear what I had to say.

3. Next time I listen to others I will . . . nod my head and say, "thats right."

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UNIT II
Lesson 4

IMPULSE CONTROL
Choosing a Solution

Concepts

- Brainstorming solutions requires coming up with alternative ideas for solving a problem.
- Evaluating possible solutions for consequences helps in choosing a solution.

Language Concepts: *solution, brainstorming, ask and answer, evaluate, consequences*

Objectives

STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:
- offer several solutions for a given problem.
- evaluate solutions for consequences on the basis of safety, feelings, fairness, and workability.
- choose a solution from several alternatives.

You Will Need

- poster: How to Solve Problems
- blank laminated poster and erasable pen

Notes to Teacher

The art of brainstorming requires that as many ideas be generated as possible. Therefore, it is critical to refrain from evaluating at this stage. Not only criticism, but seemingly positive statements, such as "That's a good idea," can shut down the creative process by causing students to censor potential suggestions. A neutral response such as "That's one idea, what else could s/he do?" spurs greater involvement.

Theresa **Dean** **Rick**

Story and Discussion

Last time we talked, we used clues to figure out that Rick and Theresa have a problem. We had several ideas about what their problem might be. We pretended to ask them to find out.

1. What is Rick and Theresa's problem? (Rick wanted to play with the ball, but Theresa had gotten it first. Rick was mad because Theresa always got the ball before him.)

Rick's impulse is to grab the ball.

2. What might happen if he grabs the ball? (They might get into a fight; Theresa might grab it back; he might get into trouble.)

3. Rick can think of more ways to solve the problem. What are *all* the things he could do? (Offer to trade; take turns; tell the teacher; fight; offer to play with her.)

(Note: Continue to probe by saying, "That's one idea. What else could she do?") Coming up with as many *solutions* as you can think of in a short amount of time is called *brainstorming*. (Show poster and point to Step #2.) It is the most important step in solving a problem.

(Note: Model Rick thinking out loud by *asking*, "What are some solutions?" and *answering* using the class brainstorm list.)

Now we have several solutions Rick could use. (Show poster and point to Step #3.) We need to *evaluate* each solution. *Evaluate* means to compare the possible *consequences*. *Consequences* are what might happen as a result of each solution. There are four questions we can *ask and answer* when we are deciding which solution to use:

- **Is it safe?**
- **How might people feel?**
- **Is it fair?**
- **Will it work?**

Let's ask these questions about each solution. I am going to model Rick *thinking out loud* for one solution:

"Let's see, what might happen if I grab the ball away from Theresa? *Is it safe?* It might not be safe—someone could get hurt. *How might she feel?* Grabbing might cause her to feel angry. *Is it fair?* Grabbing is not fair. *Will it work?* It probably won't work because I'll get in trouble or Theresa might grab it back."

4. Now I would like you to pretend you are Rick and *think out loud* for each of the other solutions we came up with. (Note: Have students take turns *asking and answering* the four evaluation questions for each solution.)

(Point to Step #4.) Choosing a solution is the fourth step in solving a problem.

5. Now that we have thought about each solution, which solution do you think Rick should choose? Why?

Role Plays

We are going to role-play problem situations in which each of you will *think out loud* by *asking and answering* the problem-solving steps.

Teacher models: *thinking out loud* to solve a problem with a student who always turns homework in late:

1. **"The problem is that this student always turns her homework in late.**
2. **What can I do about it? I could lower the student's grade, talk to the student about it, assign extra homework, or call home.**
3. **What might happen if I lower the student's grade? *Is it safe?* Yes. *How might people feel?* The student wouldn't feel very good. *Would it be fair?* It would be fair. *Will it work?* It probably wouldn't solve the problem. . . (Continue to ask the four evaluation questions for each student.)**

(After the model role play, ask the students, "How did I do? Did I follow the problem-solving steps?")

Student role plays:
- A student has taken something out of your desk.
- A kid invites you to go to the show, but you've already invited over another friend.
- A kid is being cruel to you.
- A student copied your book report.
- A student keeps kicking your desk chair.
- A kid butts in line in front of you.
- A kid insists on leading every game at recess.
- A kid won't give you a chance to play tetherball.

Optional Homework

Think of a problem you have been having or have had. Brainstorm at least four solutions to the problem. Then, evaluate each solution using the four questions in Step #3.

Transfer of Training

Continually ask "What is another solution?" to encourage brainstorming when solving interpersonal problems.

Appendix J Second Step Example

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